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ABSTRACT

In the new historical and sociocultural context, one of the most outdated foundations of education and social movements is the traditional subject-object perspective of transformative leadership. Three ways to deal with this dilemma of "decentering" the subject are as follows: to maintain traditional convictions and assumptions, to deny the possibility of any transformative utopia, and to elaborate transformation perspectives adequate for present societal needs. When the modernist foundation of the transformation of the object by the subject was in crisis, poststructuralists proposed the dissolution of the subject. They stated that any orientation to transformation is a wrong perspective because no one knows what is good or bad, right or wrong. Adult education has transformation as its essential aim. Postmodernism is, in the field of adult education, principally an attack on transformational perspectives. Like poststructuralism and postmodernism, the Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) is a reaction to a crisis of traditional modernity. Instead of the postmodernist proposal of the dissolution of the subject, TCA makes the resourceful contribution of communicative rationality grounded in intersubjectivity. Therefore, TCA reinterprets modernity from the philosophy of subject with a new understanding of modernity grounded on communicative rationality and the justification of belief through consensual validity. (Contains 21 references.) (YLB)

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TRADITIONAL MODERNITY, POSTMODERNITY AND COMMUNICATIVE MODERNITY

Related issues in constructing roles and learning tasks of adult education

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, Adult Education will have an important explosion of participation (Unesco 1996). Its new dimensions and its key influence in the information society (Castells 1993) is demanding much more substantial foundations. The study of Adult Education (AE) cannot continue in its ghetto, isolated from both the educational and the social science communities. In some countries, the study of AE is being taken seriously by those science communities and such processes make the field of AE to be also taken seriously by the wide society. This paper tries to make a contribution founding the study of issues, roles and learning tasks of AE on the present developments of social sciences and on the practices of popular adult education promoted by Center of Research for Education of Adults (CREA).

TRADITIONAL MODERNITY IN THE FIELD OF ADULT EDUCATION

Modernity is the process of rationalization which allows humanity to transform itself following universal principles rooted in human constructions like progress, freedom, equality or justice.

As traditionally understood, modernity was based on the division and relation between the subject--one who transforms--and the object--one who is transformed. In the field of education, the subject can be the teacher and the object the student. In the field of politics, the leader or the party can be the subject and the citizens or workers the object.

We have two different concepts in this understanding, which prevailed until the late 70s: indoctrination and conscientization. In the conservative concept of education as indoctrination, the subject-teacher transforms the object-student. In the revolutionary concept of education as conscientization, the subject-educator transforms the learner-object into learner-subject.

It has been nearly twenty years since Freire abandoned using his concept of conscientization. Nevertheless, many followers have been abusing this concept in relation to the

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three levels of consciousness: magic, naive and critical. Being at the magic or naive levels meant being an object. Being at the critical level meant being a subject. Learners were usually considered as situated at the magic or naive levels, the liberating educator at the critical level of consciousness.

In the traditional modernist perspective, adult educators used to think that they knew what was right and good. To make this clear, I will introduce three examples. These were common issues in European adult education practice during the seventies.

a) Participants in AE used to have debates on personal and collective issues in such fields as sexuality or politics. For instance, options like "virginity-fidelity" or "sexual liberation" were widely discussed.

b) There was a strong debate on curriculum, on such topics as "more teaching" or "more dialogue."

c) There was a reproductionist reading of the text. This reading assumes that the teacher had the right interpretation.

Adult educators used to think that we knew the best options. In some cases, we tried to teach the best options to our students. Alternatively, we tried to promote a dialogue in order that the students could arrive at the best solutions. Either way, the adult educator made the decision of which was the current option.

In the last two decades, society has changed. In the new historical and socio-cultural context, one of the most outdated foundations of education and social movements is precisely this traditional subject-object concept of transformative leadership.

Actually, no one social theory maintains the idea of the subject transforming the object, but most social theories participate in "decentering" the subject. We have (at least) three ways to deal with this dilemma:

- To dogmatically maintain traditional convictions and assumptions. In this case, there will be two major problems: a distancing of educators from participants in adult education and a distortion of original emancipatory intentions of adult education. In the late seventies, many adult educators and agencies, misunderstanding the spirit of Freire's ideas, were, in fact, indoctrinating their students.

- To deny the possibility of any transformative utopia. In the eighties in Southern Europe, we had experienced an intense undermining of critical thought, including its implications for adult education. The new Nietzscheanism, principally in the genealogical (Foucault 1969/1976), deconstructionist (Derrida 1967/1976) and postmodernist (Lyotard 1979/1984) approaches[1] has

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[1] Postmodernism was developed in Europe (This conception is not less European, white and male than modernism). Postmodernism was grounded in the works of Nietzsche. Later, a diverse set of developments were developed with the same label of postmodernism in North America. In this paper, I am referring to European works.

been the most effective means of this type of questioning.

- To elaborate transformation perspectives adequate for present societal needs. Works like Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) overcome Nietzscheanism and are a fruitful source of new social action theories and Giddens' radicalization of modernity (Giddens 1991, 1992, 1994, Beck 1995).

POSTMODERNITY: ONE MORE REBELLION AGAINST MODERNITY

When modernist foundation of the transformation of the object by the subject was in definitive crisis, poststructuralists proposed the dissolution of the subject. In other words, they stated that any orientation to transformation is a wrong perspective because no one knows what is good or bad, right or wrong. In poststructuralist view, there are no values superior to other values, there are no universal values.

AE has transformation as an essential aim. AE is a pendent task of the project of Enlightenment to spread cultural literacy over the whole humanity. This objective needs to take sides for some values and to aspire to a better life. It also supposes the trust in the possibility of the human being to transform themselves. The dissolution of the subject means whether the disappearance of AE or its reduction to ordinary training in technical skills. This is what structuralists and poststructuralists propose.

Foucault and Derrida were in the structuralist atmosphere of the Ecole Normale de Paris, where Althusser has a strong influence and there were other present authors like Bourdieu. In the words of L vi-Strauss (the creator of structuralist stream of social sciences), the aim of structuralism is not to constitute human being, but to dissolve it. Structuralism was a strong stream of thought proposing the dissolution of the subject. Besides its claims, structuralism was an inheritor of Parsons' systemic functionalism; in 1949, Levi-Strauss called primitive structuralism to functionalism.

In any case, structuralism and systemic functionalism share their reductionism to one of the two parts of reality. They take into account the structure and the system but they deny agency and lifeworld. They deny the subject. Within structuralism, there have been strong criticism against the school system. For instance, the reproduction model of analysis of education, developed by Althusser[2] and attributed to Bourdieu, tried to demonstrate how schools always

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My criticism must not be extended to North American thought related to postmodernism. I appreciate very much such emancipatory and critical perspectives as that of Henry Giroux.

[2] Althusser created the Marxist structuralism on what reproduction model was grounded. He wrote the book, "To read the Capital" and many authors substituted the reading of Marx, "The Capital" by the Althusser's book. Some years ago, Althusseur recognized (1992: 196-197) he had not read The Capital, when he wrote "To read the Capital." These dynamics have been very common. Some of the

serve capitalism. Many radical educational stream have used structuralist analysis in order to attack the school system and to propose to overcome it. But, in fact, structuralism denies the possibility for any transformation perspective. In a long term reproduction model, it has created passive acceptance of status quo, not because it is considered good, but because it is considered not transformable. It has even created a sort of cynicism; it has been frequently used in order to dismiss, as innocent or not, scientific positions trying to collaborate with social change from the educational field.

For a transformation perspective, what we should take from systemic functionalism and structuralism is some parts of their analysis on structures and systems, but only in order to include them in a very different theoretical framework. On the one hand, these systems and structures should not be considered as the reality, but only as one part of the dual reality. On the other hand, it should be jointly complemented for the analysis of the possibilities of transforming these systems.

Poststructuralism could be considered as one more step in the orientation of structuralism. Structuralism still believes in the possibility of science, of human objective knowledge. Poststructuralism denies even science. Two key authors of this stream, Foucault (1968) and Derrida (1967/1976) took from Nietzsche the concept of genealogy. Genealogy denies the validity of science.

In Foucault's approach, all alternative forces have the same horizon of power as their opponent[3] He criticizes that all descriptions of power are focused on its negative effects: power oppresses and limits. He proposes to describe positive effects of power: it creates reality. Modernism has humanized power, has created institutions that claim to be rooted in justice, reason and freedom. Foucault thinks there is nothing within such institutions or anywhere else that is rooted in these principles. What is right and just for one, would be wrong and unjust for another.

This genealogical approach seems to be a critique of all kinds of power, generating a sort

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results are a generalized misunderstanding of structuralism and a tremendous weakness of the foundations of adult education.

[3] One of the most extended errors about Foucault is that he wanted to undermine power, that he was against it. The reality is just the opposite, all Nietzscheanists consider anything is generated by power; so, they do not consider power is negative, but positive. All the Foucaulian works disallow any intent to put him on the side of those who are looking for cultural equality, emancipatory education or any other critical perspective: We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (Foucault 1975:196/1977:194).

of neutrality. But, in fact, there is no neutral thought stream. The position of genealogy opposes modernity. Nietzsche outlines this position in his book on the Genealogy of Morals defining "the advent of democracy of arbitration courts in place of wars, of equal rights for women" (Nietzsche 1887/1956:290-291), as symptoms of declining vitality.

From a transformation perspective, what we should take from the works by Foucault is their productive analysis of power, but in a different theoretical framework. On the one hand we should use a sociological concept of power and society. On the other hand we should differentiate between diverse sorts of power, for instance, democracy and dictatorships.

Derrida focused his work on the concept of diff rance (1967/ 1976), his own word different from french word (diff rence). The change of the letter e for the letter a is only perceptible graphically, but not orally; so, there is the Derridean preference of writing against fonocentrism which in Derrida is linked to logocentrism. Diff rance has a double meaning: 1) to differ (space); 2) to defer (time). Any sense is generated by spacing and timing of this diff rance. Derrida proposes deconstruction of this sense.

The parallel concept of deconstruction supposes to deconstruct not only the line of progress, but even any intent to compare two different situations. The concept of difference opens room for any relativism. Because his Nietzscheanist orientation, he places his concept of differance outside and against discourse of democracy and social justice. He even maintains these principles should be deconstructed and destroyed.From his work of deconstruction we should take his critical analysis of any culture which tries to present itself as universally and objectively superior to other cultures. But we should reject the idea that it is not possible to aspire to improve our cultures even taking superior elements from other cultures.

In the late seventies and early eighties, this approach had extraordinary popularity in southern Europe. It was paralleled by the fall of the critical perspectives in social movements. Curiously, this thought, hypothetical contrariety to all kinds of power became popular in the centers of power. Wherever there was a critical cultural movement, a critique of this critique grew up near or inside the political administration. This is one of the most important keys in understanding this apparent triumph of the new Nietzscheanism.

Genealogy and postmodernism were involved in the critique of all critical movement, welfare politics, etc. Adult educators were criticized, not only for indoctrination, but also for having in mind any humanistic utopian perspective or, in Lyotard's words, any "narrative of emancipation" (1979/1984:60).

Therefore, genealogy and postmodernism are in fact an attack against modernity, and principally, against the most advanced consequences of modernity such as rationality or solidarity. In the field of AE, it is principally an attack on transformational perspectives. Any adult educator proposing any emancipatory idea was denounced as having a narrow horizon of power. In order to illustrate this, let us re-examine our former examples:

a) In terms of sexuality, for example, the new Nietzscheanism would assert that no one

can say one option is better than another. No one can know whether "virginity-fidelity" or "sexual liberation" is the best model.

b) The new Nietzscheanism would assert that no one can say one option for curriculum is better than another. For instance, no one can know whether "more teaching" or "more dialogue" is the best option.

c) The new Nietzscheanism would assert what we should do is to deconstruct the diverse interpretations rather than to build an intersubjective interpretation of the text.

Within the new Nietzschean orientation, any educator with a transformative perspective thinks s/he knows the right option. So, s/he is trying to impose it on participants. If s/he is doing so from the indoctrination approach, at least the imposition is clear. But if s/he is doing so from a democratic approach, the imposition is not so evident. In the early eighties, many radical educators used to sympathize with this kind of criticism which was apparently against any efforts to influence, even against the fostering critical reflection and transformative perspectives. But the new Nietzscheanism, in fact, supports traditional and conservative forces by criticizing the very process of rationalization which allows humanity to transform itself.

There continues to be much social pressure and violence in contemporary sexual conduct. We need transformation perspectives in order to overcome these behaviors. We must be able to reject certain sexual conduct such as rape. We believe in a humane, rational society in which each person may have an equal opportunity to participate freely and fully in discourses to make the decisions which affect them and to validate the meaning in their collective experiences.

We also need transformational perspectives in order to overcome many present educational situations. We still have authoritarian curriculums. We must be able to reject certain curriculum options such as those imposed by the dictatorship-oriented governmental agencies, especially when they limit our efforts to achieve full and free participation and to foster rational reflection.

Attitudes toward transformative perspective are not neutral, but require taking sides depending on present situations. Transformational perspectives hold that, in modern societies, rationality is itself an universal which has implicit ideal conditions for adult learning which may be used as criteria for educational value judgements.

COMMUNICATIVE MODERNITY AND THE ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Like poststructuralism and postmodernism, the Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) is a reaction to crisis of traditional modernity (Habermas 1981/1984, 1981/1987, 1982/198b). All of these theories reject the modernist foundation of the transformation of the object by the subject. Instead of the postmodernist proposal of the dissolution of the subject,[4] TCA makes the

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[4] Habermas (1985/1987) has written a whole critique of postmodernism. He maintains that, behind its postEnlightenment appearance, there lies an old tradition of counterEnlightenment.

resourceful contribution of communicative rationality grounded in intersubjectivity.

Therefore, TCA reinterprets modernity from the philosophy of subject toward the communicative rationality. In doing so, this theory has overcome both the crises of modernity and postmodernism. The crisis of modernity was about its grounding in the philosophy of the subject. Postmodernist and genealogist critiques of modernity are focused on this grounding. Both are overcome in TCA, in favor of a new understanding of modernity grounded on communicative rationality and the justification of belief through consensual validity.

Within the communicative approach, we can now look at the former three examples from different point of view: a) Within the communicative approach, unlike within the traditional modernist viewpoint, there is no subject knowing the best sexual option for other people: "virginity-fidelity" / "sexual liberation", "homosexuality" / "heterosexuality". Within the communicative approach, unlike within the new Nietzscheanist viewpoint, we can state that some sexual conducts are right and some are wrong. For instance, we can reject rape. That is not possible within new Nietzschianist approach. For instance, Foucault used to propose, as a consequence of his asocial conception of sexuality, the depenalization of rape (Cooper 1977).

It is the notion of consensus that makes the difference. We can not say which sexual option is the best (for instance, "homosexuality" / "heterosexuality"). That depends on people and context. But we can and must claim that one indispensable condition is free consensus among participants. In order to be right, any sexual conduct must be the result of the free agreement of participants.. One sexual conduct is absolutely wrong if it is the result of imposition and violence to any of the participants (such as rape).

b) Within the communicative approach, unlike the traditional modernist viewpoint, there is no subject knowing the best curriculum for every context and situation. We can not make the claim for more emphasis on teaching or on dialogue every time and everywhere. No one knows the best solution for any particular educational situation.

Within communicative approach, unlike the new Nietzscheanist viewpoint, we can state that some curricular options are right and some are wrong. For instance, we can reject dictatorships-oriented indoctrination and we can favor rational discourse.The notion of consensus makes again the difference. We can not say if we must increase teaching or dialogue. That depends on people and context. But we can and must claim that one indispensable condition is free consensus among participants. In order to be right, any curricular option must have the free agreement of participants. One curricular option (like indoctrination in dictatorships) is wrong if it is the result of the imposition and violence to any of the participants.

c) Within the communicative approach, unlike the traditional modernist viewpoint, there is no subject knowing the right interpretation of the text. We can not say that the interpretation of the text by the teacher is superior to the interpretation of the text by a student. We must remember the people referred as illiterates were the creators of the literature. If we take some of these creators of oral literature in the Middle Age and give them one of our school exams or tests about the literature they created, they probably would fail to pass the tests.

Within the communicative approach, unlike the new Nietzscheanist viewpoint, we can state that we can improve our interpretation of the text intersubjectively. The notion of dialogue makes again the difference. Freely talking with others, we can discover new issues in the text. We can also develop collective interpretations of the text without eliminating our differences. Summarizing the principles involved in this argumentation, we have the following five characteristics of the communicative approach[5]:

- It supports the transformative perspective implicit in every understanding of modernity.
- Transformation is carried out by those who are participants in the action.
- All of us are subjects in the communicative process.
- We don't know what is true or false, good or bad. But the communicative approach states that the process to establish these criteria must involve a best judgement, a consensus continuously being revised by new knowledge and points of view.
- So, it is possible to arrive at a statement of universal principles about what is true or false, good or bad.

Within TCA, rationality is communicative and grounded in intersubjective dialogue. Different contexts don't impede dialogue. It is possible to arrive at a consensus among a plurality of voices. Only if we don't have this concept of a communicative rationality must we choose primacy of unity above plurality (as in logocentrism) or primacy of plurality above unity (as in contextualism). As Habermas says, "The metaphysical primacy of unity above plurality and the contextual primacy of plurality above unity seem to me secret accomplices. I state that the unity of reason only remains perceptible in the plurality of the voices" (1988/1990b:157).

Of course, this consensus is always limited by constraints. Within the communicative rationality approach Habermas proposes working to overcome these constraints. This is the task of modernity, the process of rationalization which allows humanity to transform itself following universal principles rooted in human constructions like progress, freedom, equality and justice.

All critical or radical perspectives know that no democracy is free of cultural arbitrariness, but I still support it. The limitations of democracy cannot be a a reason to turn against it (as a former member of the clandestine fight against the Franco's dictatorship, I know the other option all too well), but are rather all the more reasons to work and fight within it to overcome its constraints and inequalities. That is the main task of the communicative approach.

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[5] Problems of evolutionism within Habermas's concepts of learning (Habermas, 1981/1989a) and moral evolution (Habermas, 1983/1990a) are a consequence of his overemphasis on Piaget. There has been a progressive improvement in his later works. (Habermas 1985: 89-90). Then, he has introduced Vygotski in order to link cognitive operations with everyday life (Habermas, 1988/1990b: 17). I will deal with this important question in a later paper.

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